

It is interesting that these oxpeckers should be breeding in the rains in Zambia, when animals are considerably dispersed and hosts difficult to see in thick vegetation. It is known that within an area of four square miles around the nest the only potential hosts at this time were 20 Buffalo, about 9 Kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros* Pallas) and a few Wart Hog (*Phacochoerus aethiopicus* Pallas) (personal observation). However, I noted *B. africanus* on only the first two of these species. Other ungulates in the area seldom, if ever, carried oxpeckers. It would seem that these nesting *B. africanus* were feeding solely on these few Buffalo and Kudu, both of which are species inhabiting thickets in which they are not readily visible. I noted that these Buffalo were supporting at least 20 *B. africanus* at this time. The feeding of the young by four adults might be in order to provide a sufficient supply of food at a difficult time of year. Oxpeckers may have good eyesight, but even so, considerably more difficulty must be experienced in finding hosts during the rains than in the dry season.

B. africanus is quite common in game areas in Zambia, being especially numerous in the Kafue National Park. The lack of breeding records is therefore surprising, especially as the feeding of young at the nest appears to be a noisy affair, noticeable at a considerable distance.

I should like to thank B. L. Mitchell for examining the stomach contents referred to in this paper; he and C. W. Benson read the draft of this paper.

References:

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Winter dress of *Cisticola chiniana bensoni*

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Through the very great kindness of C. W. Benson, I have now been able to examine two winter specimens of *Cisticola chiniana bensoni* Traylor (1964, B.B.O.C., 84: 83), previously known only from summer dress males. One of these is a first winter male, taken 25 April 1964 at Kalabo, Barotseland, the other an adult female, taken on the north edge of Liuwa plain, 14° 15' S, 22° 15' E, on 2 May, 1964. Both were collected by R. C. Hart.

The female is in fine fresh contour plumage and completing wing moult, the first to sixth primaries are fresh, the seventh growing, and the eighth to tenth old and worn. The tail is mixed, with the central rectrices still of the old summer plumage. The winter plumage turns out to be surprisingly close to the summer, being almost as dark and a warmer, less greyish, brown on the upper parts. The crown is a little more reddish, and the dorsal streaking slightly more pronounced. This is in marked contrast to the situation in *smithersi*, the nearest relative to the south. In *smithersi* the winter plumage is much paler and more tawny than the summer, the crown is much brighter, and the dorsal streaking strongly marked. It follows that the racial characters of *bensoni* are better marked

in the winter than in the summer plumage, *bensoni* being much darker and more greyish-brown.

The young male is in complete first winter contour plumage, and has begun replacement of the juvenal remiges. The first through fourth are fresh, the fifth half-grown, and the remainder old juvenal feathers. Assurance that this bird is a first winter male and not an adult in post-nuptial moult is given by the marked difference in length between the juvenal and second set of primaries (see fig.). The contour of the wing of the first winter bird (left) shows a marked step between the old and the new



Cisticola chiniana bensoni. First winter ♂ in wing moult (left); adult male (right).

feathers, while the contour of the wing of the fully adult bird is smooth. This replacement of the wing feathers is a peculiar moult, falling as it does between the post-juvenal and first pre-nuptial moults of the contour feathers. Lynes (1930, *Cisticola* Suppl.: pl. 1) links it with the first pre-nuptial moult, but notes that the moult of the remiges begins some time before the moult of the contour plumage.

This first winter plumaged male is quite unlike the adult female. It is hardly to be separated from winter plumaged *smithersi*, being quite pale and tawny and heavily streaked above. Whether this is the rule for first winter birds of *bensoni* cannot be determined from a single specimen. Lynes (*l.c.*) says that the first winter plumage is the same in colour and pattern as adult winter plumage, but that is certainly not the case with our two birds. Only adequate series will permit this anomaly to be clarified.

Larger size was also a character of *bensoni*. The young male does not give a satisfactory measurement because of its moult from juvenal primaries. The female has a wing length of 55 mm., about the mean of the measurements of seven females of *smithersi*, 53-57 (55.4). Size difference in females is obviously not great if it exists at all.

The range of *bensoni* can now be outlined more surely. The type locality is on the eastern edge of Liuwa plain, and the race evidently inhabits the woodlands bordering the plain between the Luanginga and the Luambimba rivers.